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NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE DAILY CABLE

Thursday 14 September 1978 CG NIDC 78/215

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NATIONAL SECURITY INFORMATION

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25X1

National Intelligence Daily Cable for Thursday, 14 September 1978.



25X1

The NID Cable is for the purpose of informing senior US officials.

CONTENTS

25X1



NICARAGUA: Situation Report

Page 3

25X1

ETHIOPIA: Mengistu's Speech

Page 3



BRIEFS:

Page 6

25X1



Israel
Colombia

25X1



Page Denied

Next 1 Page(s) In Document Denied

NICARAGUA: Situation Report

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[] Violence continued yesterday between the insurgent Sandinistas and National Guard elements. According to reports reaching the US Embassy in Managua, disturbances took place in several cities, including Masaya, Esteli, Chinandega, and Leon.

25X1

[] Guard aircraft flew over Leon, according to an Embassy observer, with at least one strafing the outskirts of the city. Local residents of Leon assert that the guerrillas retain control of eight of the nine districts, including the center of town.

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[] The Embassy concludes that the government is hard pressed to put down the insurrection in Leon, Chinandega, and Esteli, despite Somoza's optimism, earlier in the week, that the towns would soon be secured. Reports on the situation in Masaya are conflicting.

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[] President Somoza's suspension last night of constitutional rights for 30 days confirms the difficulties he faces in restoring order to the country. []

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ETHIOPIA: Mengistu's Speech

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[] Chairman Mengistu made no major announcements in his speech Tuesday marking the fourth anniversary of Ethiopia's revolution. His remarks indicate he will place increased emphasis on solving Ethiopia's economic problems. His stated commitment to socialism and to solidarity with the "progressive camp" glossed over some significant differences with the USSR and Cuba.

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[] Mengistu undoubtedly disappointed his Soviet and Cuban allies and many domestic leftists by not announcing the formation of a Marxist-Leninist workers' party. His failure to move more rapidly on this issue has already led to considerable friction with his Communist allies.

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[] Mengistu apparently is reluctant to act because he believes his own party, Seded, which he wants to be the vanguard of the new single party, does not yet have sufficient control over the civilian political process. He may announce

[redacted]

before the celebrations end the merger of Ethiopia's semiofficial political parties under an umbrella organization as a preliminary step toward the formation of a single party.

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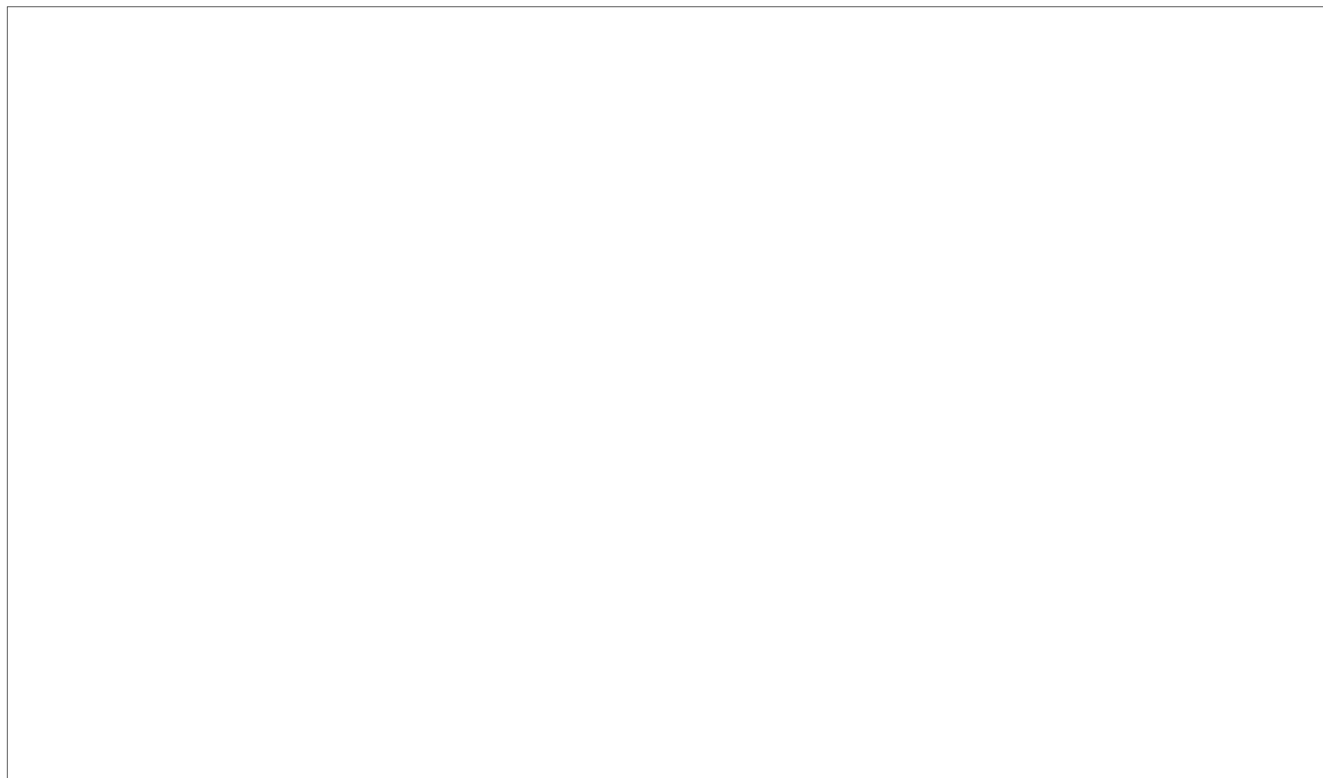
[redacted] The Ethiopian leader lavishly praised the Soviets and Cubans for their aid in repelling Somalia's invasion of the Ogaden, and again implicitly threatened to take action against Somalia if it continues to support insurgency in the Ogaden. His unexpected criticism of China as an enemy of the revolution was probably an attempt to curry favor with the Soviets and Cubans.

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[redacted] Mengistu emphasized the need for domestic economic development. The Ethiopian economy, which weathered the first three years of the revolution in relatively good shape, has deteriorated over the past year. Mengistu said the regime would attempt to solve major problems in agricultural production and distribution by encouraging collective farming and extending government control over the distribution of basic goods. [redacted]

25X1

25X1



25X1

25X1

Page Denied

Next 1 Page(s) In Document Denied

25X1

25X1

25X1

Israel

25X1

[] //Israel began series production of the Chariot main battle tank last month, [] 25X1
[] The tank, the most significant ground-force weapon system the Israelis have yet designed and developed, should enter service with active units this fall.//

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[] //The Israelis had scheduled production of the Chariot to begin nearly a year ago, but the program was delayed because of problems with the engine and drivetrain. The Israelis apparently are already testing an improved version of the tank with more mobility and armor protection. They reportedly hope to begin production of this version by 1981.//

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[] //Israel apparently is building a prototype of a third, more highly powered version, programed for possible production in the mid-1980s. The US attache believes, however, that the Israelis will decide that the second version will meet their future needs.//

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[] //The Chariot is larger than most modern Soviet and Western main battle tanks, weighs about 56 metric tons, and is equipped with a 105-mm gun, which could be replaced by a larger caliber gun. The attache believes that the Israelis will probably assign the first Chariots to armored units on the Golan Heights. [] 25X1

Colombia

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[] The Colombian Government has banned public demonstrations and placed on alert in Bogota 40,000 members of the army and security forces in preparation for possible violence during demonstrations today. Demonstrations were planned to commemorate the general strike last September in which 20 people were killed and hundreds injured.

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[redacted] Some Colombian officials believe that the assassination on Tuesday of a former minister who played a role in suppressing last year's strike may be linked to the anniversary protest demonstrations. The murder, however, could also be an act of defiance against President Turbay's tough new security statute designed to control the nation's serious problems of crime, terrorism, and political subversion. If so, it could mark the beginning of increased conflict between insurgents and security forces. [redacted]

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